

Editorial

Ernst Rüdin, 1874–1952: A German Psychiatrist and Geneticist

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Ernst Rüdin (1874–1952) was one of the major representatives of German psychiatry, genetics, and eugenics in the first half of the twentieth century. Born in Switzerland, he was influenced early on by his brother-in-law Alfred Ploetz, who propagated the ideas of social Darwinism and “racial hygiene” in Germany after 1890. Rüdin began his career in psychiatry at Emil Kraepelin’s clinic in Munich, where he developed the concept of “empirical genetic prognosis” of mental disorders. He published his first results on the genetics of schizophrenia in 1916. From 1917–1945 Rüdin was director of the Genealogical-Demographic Department at the German Institute for Psychiatric Research, which Kraepelin had founded. After a short interruption from 1925–1928, Rüdin returned to Munich and enlarged the department. After 1933 the National Socialist government and party endorsed Rüdin’s work by supplying financial and manpower support. Nazi health policy required a scientific basis to justify its actions, and Rüdin’s ideas corresponded partially with this kind of thinking. In 1934 he prepared the official commentary on the “Law for the Prevention of Genetically Diseased Offspring.” The connections of Rüdin’s department to National Socialism can be understood as one of the main reasons for the critical attitude towards psychiatric genetics in Germany after 1945. © 1996 Wiley-Liss, Inc.

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“Science” as Prejudice.—It follows from the laws of class distinction that the learned, in so far as they belong to the intellectual middle class, are debarred from getting even a sight of the really great problems . . . Besides, their courage, and similarly their outlook, does not reach so far—and above all, their need, which makes them investigators, their innate anticipation and desire that things should be constituted in *such and such a way*, their fears and hopes, are too soon quieted and set at rest.

Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Joyful Wisdom* (“La Gaya Scienza”), V, Aphorisms, 373. Translated from the German by Thomas Common (1964).

THE GERMAN STERILIZATION LAW OF 1933

On July 14, 1933, the cabinet of the German Reich under Adolf Hitler passed the “Law for the Prevention of Genetically Diseased Offspring” (*Gesetz zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses*). The law went into effect on January 1, 1934, marking the first time the National Socialist policy on population, health, and psychiatry had a direct impact on the general public. By 1939, in accordance with the regulations set forth in the sterilization law, at least 300,000 people had been sterilized who had “hereditary feeble-mindedness” (*angeborener Schwachsinn*), “schizophrenia,” “circular (manic-depressive) insanity” (*zirkuläres [manisch-depressives] Irresein*), “hereditary epilepsy” (*erbliche Fallsucht*), “hereditary Huntington’s chorea” (*erblicher Veitstanz*), “hereditary blindness” (*erbliche Blindheit*), “hereditary deafness” (*erbliche Taubheit*), a “severe hereditary physical malformation” (*schwere erbliche körperliche Mißbildung*), or “severe alcoholism.” Although a procedure comparable to that used in civil law was specified, a distinctive feature of the law in the so-called “genetic health courts” and “appellate genetic health courts” (*Erbgesundheitsgerichte, Erbgesundheitsobergerichte*) was the legality of forced sterilization against the expressed will of the person concerned. As a result, in the eyes of the public the law was always seen as a punitive measure [Bock, 1986]. Furthermore, in practice the diagnostic category of “feeble-mindedness” frequently included individuals belonging to the

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lower classes and individuals whom for one reason or another the National Socialist state found "socially undesirable." However, this law was not directed primarily at achieving goals of racial policy (*Rassenpolitik*), such as persecution of Jews, but rather at achieving goals of racial hygiene (*Rassenhygiene*, the term used for eugenics in Germany). Beginning in 1939, the sterilization law was rarely applied because the impending second World War led, through the murders in the "T4" or "euthanasia" action, to a markedly more radical Nazi position with respect to the mentally ill.

When the sterilization law went into effect in January 1934 an official commentary appeared concurrently in the highly regarded Munich medical publishing house of Julius F. Lehmann, which since the turn of the century had supported the German nationalist and racial hygiene movements [Stark, 1981]. There were three official editors [Gütt et al., 1934]: Arthur Gütt and Falk Ruttke, who were the responsible department heads in the Reich ministries, and Ernst Rüdin, the Swiss-German psychiatrist and human geneticist who since 1931 had been the managing director of the German Institute for Psychiatric Research (*Deutsche Forschungsanstalt für Psychiatrie, Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institut*) in Munich. Although Rüdin can be considered one of the most important representatives of his specialty in the first half of the twentieth century, today even in Germany most psychiatrists have only a vague idea of who this scientist was. And this is the case even though during the "Third Reich" he held numerous important positions: as president of professional organizations for neurologists and psychiatrists, as a member of and consultant to genetic health courts, and as an expert consulted by the relevant authorities [Weber, 1991]. His work in these positions has been described more than once in the medical literature and in publications on the history of science in Nazi Germany. Without doubt this is a very important aspect of Rüdin's work, and for many authors it brought to mind the idea of the "typical Nazi psychiatrist" [Lifton, 1986; Müller-Hill, 1984]. But such an epithet provides an inaccurate picture of Rüdin's very marked influence during his lifetime unless we also consider two other factors, namely his origins in the temperance and racial hygiene (eugenics) movements and his chief scientific contribution, the development of what he termed "empirical genetic prognosis" (*empirische Erbprognose*). The formulation of these views had largely been completed before National Socialism became a politically important force in the minds of the German public.

EARLY INFLUENCES ON A RACIAL HYGIENIST

Ernst Rüdin (1874–1952) grew up in a prosperous upper middle-class family in the German-speaking part of northeastern Switzerland. His father, whose family had been peasants, was initially a teacher of "physical education and drawing" in a high school in St. Gallen. In about 1870, however, mainly for financial reasons, he took a position in the embroidery industry there and eventually attained a high managerial position [Zerbin-Rüdin, 1991]. Rüdin's upper middle-class

background was typical for many of those who later supported social Darwinism and racial hygiene [Weindling, 1989]. An older sister of Rüdin, Pauline (1866–1942), played a decisive role in his personal development and whole future life. She was one of the first women admitted to the University of Zurich as a medical student, and it was at the university that she met the German physician and social Darwinist Alfred Ploetz (1860–1940), whom she married in 1890. At about that time Ploetz turned away from his earlier socialist ideals and came to believe that even the political organization of the future society he envisioned must be in accordance with the principles of biology and Darwinism [Ploetz, 1895]. Ploetz's ideas on racial hygiene were determined mainly by his utopian world view, which helps to explain his extensive references to classical literature, e.g., to Plato's *Republic*. Moreover, racial hygiene provided what appeared to be a sound scientific foundation for elitist and nationalistic positions on social order in the internal and external political conflicts of the European nation-states.

Beginning about the turn of the century such views of racial hygiene gradually became more popular among the leaders of the day [Kelly, 1981; Wehler, 1973]. The influence of social Darwinism was not restricted to Germany. The eugenics movement had started in England with Karl Pearson and Ronald Fisher, and the first laws requiring the sterilization of the mentally handicapped were enacted in the U.S.A. after 1900 [Radford, 1991]. In Germany, however, racial hygiene became closely connected with nationalistic and antisemitic tendencies, and this aggregation of ideas was not only the source of Rüdin's views, but also one of the paths that led to National Socialism.

The 16-year-old Ernst Rüdin could follow firsthand the development of that German derivative of social Darwinism termed racial hygiene through his contacts with his brother-in-law Alfred Ploetz. The scientific and social climate associated with this movement exercised such a powerful influence on him that during his entire life he never escaped its vortex, either personally or emotionally [Weber, 1993]. Through Ploetz, Rüdin also became familiar with the naturalistic and pan-Germanic reform ideas permeating the literary circle of the brothers Gerhart and Carl Hauptmann [Hauptmann, 1966] and with the writings of August Forel, who as professor of psychiatry in Zurich eagerly supported the temperance movement and the concept of sexual hygiene. Forel also supported goals compatible with social Darwinism and demanded of the "lower half" of the population that it do without progeny so that Europe could win the "battle of the races." In this context he accepted state-ordered compulsory measures as a theoretical possibility [Forel, 1904].

Ploetz developed his views on racial hygiene in the wake of his disappointing visits to utopian-socialistic groups in the U.S.A., especially the "Icarians" in Corning, Iowa. After returning to Berlin he published his ideas in 1895 in a book entitled "The Fitness of our Race and the Protection of the Weak" (*Die Tüchtigkeit unserer Rasse und der Schutz der Schwachen*). Rüdin, on the other hand, was active at first in the Swiss tem-

perance movement. While still in high school he founded the students' temperance association "Humanitas" in his home town of St. Gallen [Die junge Schweiz, 1941]. Here he attracted attention not only for his uncompromising position on racial hygiene but also for his organizational talents and for his single-minded championing of his ideas in public. Ploetz capitalized on Rüdin's talents and convictions later on, when in June 1905 together with Rüdin and the ethnologist Richard Thurnwald he founded the Society for Racial Hygiene (*Gesellschaft für Rassenhygiene*) in Berlin. Although Ploetz's concept of a strong and healthy race (which he termed *Vitalrasse*) differed from the anthropological concept of race (which he termed *Systemrasse*), both concepts justified the superior position of the white European as the highest product of primate evolution. Moreover, in his private life Ploetz held antisemitic positions.

In the past, Rüdin's importance for the early phase of the racial hygiene movement in Germany has tended to be undervalued rather than overvalued. Through his close personal association with Ploetz he was involved in all of the important decisions of the Society for Racial Hygiene. Furthermore, he took several trips to Scandinavia and to France to help propagate doctrines of racial hygiene. Up until 1945 Rüdin held numerous positions in the Society for Racial Hygiene, primarily in the Munich chapter (founded in 1907), and during the "Third Reich" he was president and then "Reich representative."

At 29, Rüdin formulated his program for a future racial hygiene utopia, leaving no doubt as to his desire to see his program put into political action. His ideas appeared in an article published in 1903 on "Alcohol in the Life Process of the Race" (*Alkohol im Lebensprozeß der Rasse*). In this article he wrote that to obtain "biologically fit members of the race" it was necessary not only to have "maximum propagation of those who are healthy, robust and . . . ethically superior" but also to exclude "the weak, ill, unfit and morally reprehensible from reproduction by artificial selection, . . . by instruction and by private and government force" [Rüdin, 1903]. Thus Rüdin had already set his goals for racial hygiene at the turn of the century, and he pursued them without any major concessions until he was relieved of his position at the Institute by the U.S. military government in Bavaria in November 1945.

To enable publications on such ideas, Ploetz founded the "Archives of Racial and Social Biology" (*Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschaftsbiologie*). The first issue appeared in January 1904, and was greeted enthusiastically by several German biologists and anthropologists as an "expression of a new epoch." Initially Rüdin worked for the journal as a reviewer of contemporary medical and anthropological literature. Between 1905–1907 he was full-time editor, then a co-editor, and after Ploetz's death in 1940 the editor-in-chief.

Rüdin's decision in 1893 to study medicine also appears to have been motivated by the example of Ploetz and the idea that as a physician he could devote much of his time and attention to racial hygiene. A few years later this aspect was again the decisive factor in his turning to psychiatry. In 1898 he wrote Forel that he would not be satisfied to be a physician who only "tries

to repair what has just broken" and that he felt a "strong urge . . . to wipe out illness at its roots, in particular to prevent insanity" [Rüdin to Forel, 1898–1968].

Rüdin pursued his studies in Geneva, Heidelberg, Berlin, and Zurich, taking the state medical examination in 1898 and earning his doctorate in Zurich in 1901. The fact that his doctoral dissertation was on a topic within the realm of forensic psychiatry shows that his interests lay not primarily in clinical psychiatry but rather in social aspects of the discipline. He did his specialty training in neurology at the highly-regarded private hospital and clinic for neurology of Hermann Oppenheim in Berlin, and in psychiatry at the University and Canton Hospital for the Insane in Basel-Friedmatt.

The type of training Rüdin underwent indicates that while he was interested in a successful academic career, he never lost sight of his goal of a racial hygiene utopia. It thus seems only logical that in 1901 he went to Heidelberg to work with Emil Kraepelin at the university hospital of psychiatry, and that he followed Kraepelin to Munich in 1907. By then Kraepelin was considered to be one of the world's leading psychiatrists, having gained this reputation in large part because of his revolutionary classification of psychoses.

Until the end of his academic career, Rüdin defended Kraepelin's nosology of psychoses. He never accepted other concepts developed by Bleuler, Hoche, Kleist, Leonhard, or Bumke. Kraepelin's "unitarian view" of schizophrenia was a prerequisite to Rüdin's eugenics: without a coherent nosological entity, named *dementia praecox*, neither Rüdin's genetic research nor his ideas of racial hygiene would have been suggestive.

Even more important for Rüdin, however, was Kraepelin's association with French psychiatry, and in particular with Benedict Augustin Morel's concept of *dégénérescence*. For Kraepelin the most important "inner cause" (*innere Ursache*) of psychosis was "hereditary degeneration" (*erbliche Entartung*) [Kraepelin, 1909]. Speaking generally, Kraepelin cannot be regarded as a proponent of racial hygiene, but he was active in German nationalist circles during World War I and openly supported some of the ideas of social Darwinism. Shortly after the turn of the century Rüdin already counted on his support, and in 1903 he wrote to Forel that Kraepelin alone would be able to "make inroads among the narrow-minded psychiatrists" for the cause of racial hygiene.

Rüdin's expectations were fulfilled: in 1909 he succeeded Alois Alzheimer as senior physician at Kraepelin's Munich hospital, and in the same year he completed his postdoctoral dissertation, again on a topic in forensic psychiatry. In 1915 he was named an adjunct professor at the University of Munich. Beginning in the spring of 1911 Rüdin held a seminar on "Degeneration: Its Existence, Associated Problems, and Prophylaxis" (*Tatsache, Probleme und Prophylaxe der Entartung*) [Archives of the University of Munich, 1909–1925]. The importance of his position at the University of Munich Hospital for Psychiatry is evident not only in his function as Kraepelin's deputy but also in the fact that in the confusion of German politics at the end of World War I he testified in court on the main figures in the

Munich *Räterepublik* and its conservative opponents. (The *Räterepublik*, similar to the early soviet republics and led by a group of writers and philosophers, existed briefly in Munich during 1919.) His assessment of the conservative royalist Anton Graf Arco-Valley, who assassinated the Social Democratic Bavarian prime minister Kurt Eisner in February 1919, reflects especially well the complex problems involved in a psychiatric evaluation of political action. For Rüdin, the revolutionary leaders were morally defective "infantile psychopaths," and by the same logic, Eisner's assassination was tyrannicide.

EMPIRICAL GENETIC PROGNOSIS: SCIENCE VS. RACIAL HYGIENE

In 1910 at the university hospital for psychiatry in Munich, Ernst Rüdin set to work to provide evidence in support of his views on racial hygiene through field studies in human genetics. After the rediscovery of Mendel's laws by Carl Correns, Erich Tschermak, and Hugo de Vries in 1900, it was considered an established fact in psychiatry that the origins of mental disorders must be closely connected to hereditary processes. But there were neither suitable theoretical models nor sufficient data available for evaluation. With few exceptions, the relevant publications consisted of a few case reports and general observations on the "degeneration problem" (*Entartungsproblem*) and on the "predispositions" to what were termed physical "stigmata" [Ziehen, 1908].

With his method of "empirical genetic prognosis," Rüdin chose a completely new approach to verifying the importance of genetic factors in the pathogenesis of mental illness. His method involved a combination of three already extant techniques. The first was the "sibling and proband method," under development since 1900 by the well-known Stuttgart physician and statistician Wilhelm Weinberg [Weinberg, 1913]. Here, statistical methods were employed that for the first time overcame the systematic selection bias of past numerical family studies of recessively inherited disorders. Second, the historian Ottokar Lorenz had reformed genealogy, describing in 1898 those documents and procedures which, if one wanted to make reliable statements that went beyond the merely anecdotal, were necessary for modern genealogical research in the service of the social sciences and history [Lorenz, 1898]. And finally, since his Heidelberg days, Emil Kraepelin had been using the "counting card" (*Zählkarte*), a system that made possible a standardized, chronological, and structured documentation of the course of a mental illness for large groups of patients.

Rüdin studied 701 families (including 4,823 children) in which there was a case of dementia praecox (Kraepelin's term for the main group of schizophrenic psychoses). He found most of the index subjects at the university hospital of psychiatry in Munich, and the rest at the district insane asylum (*Heil- und Pflegeanstalt Haar-Egling*). As recommended by Lorenz, he collected extensive information about the individuals affected, their close relatives, and their ancestors from physicians, hospitals, schools, offices of vital statistics, mental hospitals, and government offices; as did Kraepelin,

he kept records on each index subject and his or her family by making tables and using counting cards. And finally, he used Weinberg's statistical methods to evaluate his data. His findings, published in 1916, included risk rates (*Gefährdungsziffern*) which, depending on the relationship to an already affected individual, indicated the probability of developing a schizophrenic psychosis. These findings remain essentially valid to this day [Rüdin, 1916].

Rüdin's dementia praecox study represented a major advance even from an international perspective, because it replaced earlier genetic views of psychiatry, which had been based on anecdotal reports, by systematic studies and statistical procedures. His work was received positively both within Germany and abroad, and immediately began to be used as a model for similar projects. However, Rüdin did not attain his original goal of demonstrating that schizophrenia is inherited in accordance with Mendel's laws. Although the genetic mechanism he had postulated remained plausible, it was still no more than a working hypothesis.

Rüdin himself often pointed out that his findings were only preliminary. But this did not prevent him from using them in arguing for the need to implement a racial hygiene program with far-reaching social consequences. As a result of Rüdin's conviction that it was necessary and proper to realize his racial hygiene utopia, he did not perceive unresolved scientific questions or contradictions as a reason for caution but rather as a reason for conducting further large-scale genetic-psychiatric studies in justification of eugenic measures [Rüdin, 1927]. In spite of these views on racial hygiene, Rüdin's dementia praecox study established him as one of the leading human geneticists of his time.

In February 1917, Emil Kraepelin was successful in founding the German Institute for Psychiatric Research, which he had undertaken at the suggestion of the German Psychiatric Association (*Deutscher Verein für Psychiatrie*) and with financial support from James Loeb, an American banker of German-Jewish background. It then seemed only logical for him to ask Rüdin, his student, senior staff physician, and deputy, to head the Genealogical-Demographic Department (*Genealogisch-Demographische Abteilung*) of the new Institute. In Kraepelin's view, psychiatric research needed to have its basis in the natural sciences, and human genetics had a firm place in his research concept right from the start. Although the Institute did not become affiliated with the Kaiser Wilhelm Society for the Advancement of Science (*Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaften*) until 1924, from the outset it was organized along the lines of a Kaiser Wilhelm Institute. For example, on the one hand the Institute was tailored to Kraepelin as an individual with his own scientific interest and as an authority in his field, but on the other the department heads had complete freedom with respect to their research. Furthermore, the mixed financing by government bodies (such as the Bavarian state monopoly on alcohol) and by private sponsors (such as the banking families of Loeb, Heinsheimer, and Warburg, and the Association of the German Chemical Industry (*Verband der Deutschen*

Chemischen Industrie)) was not uncommon at Kaiser Wilhelm Institutes. Finally, the similarities in the statutes and the scientific orientation of the German Institute for Psychiatric Research and the Kaiser Wilhelm Society simplified the process of "affiliation" with the Kaiser Wilhelm Society. The latter, a private organization financed mainly by German industry, the Reich, and the Prussian State, was founded in 1911 to advance basic research in the natural sciences outside the university system.

Rüdin made use of the possibilities opened up to him by this situation to realize his ideas on psychiatric genetics and racial hygiene. While his still small staff refined the method of empirical genetic prognosis and analyzed patterns of inheritance (e.g., in Huntington's chorea, personality disorders, paranoia, and epilepsy, [Entres, 1921]), Rüdin himself did less and less research and became increasingly involved in science management. Although he had conducted a parallel study on manic-depressive illness that resembled the dementia praecox study, and by the beginning of the 1920's had completed a paper on this work, he never had it published. Leaving external influences aside, this may have been in part because the description of a formal pattern of inheritance for manic-depressive illness was even more difficult than for schizophrenic psychoses [Max Planck Institute of Psychiatry, 1922–1925].

During this same period, Rüdin frequently served as an expert on questions of racial hygiene, drawing on the authority derived from his position as department head at the German Institute for Psychiatric Research and as a Scientific Member (*Wissenschaftliches Mitglied*) of the Kaiser Wilhelm Society. In 1923 and 1925 he prepared a list of indications for eugenic abortion for the Prussian ministry of public welfare and for a revised version of the Swiss penal code, a list that was quite similar to the later Law for the Prevention of Genetically Diseased Offspring. Regarding involuntary sterilization, prior to 1933 Rüdin's public statements were often ambivalent, but at least for "unreasonable people" (*Uneinsichtige*) he did not exclude the possibility [Rüdin, 1928]. Here Rüdin saw the rights of the individual as a stumbling block on the path to the ideal eugenic society.

In April 1924 Rüdin celebrated his fiftieth birthday. Although he then headed a department at an internationally respected research institute and was considered to be an authority on psychiatric genetics and racial hygiene, he was still only an adjunct professor at a university. Added to this were the constant financial difficulties of the Institute, which in Rüdin's view prevented him from conducting the required large-scale genetic projects. For this reason he accepted the professorship offered him in 1925 at the University Hospital of Neurology and Psychiatry in Basel. But neither party fulfilled the other's expectations: the Basel authorities had hoped for a clinical psychiatrist, and Rüdin had hoped for support for his genealogical-demographic investigations [Haenel, 1982].

But Rüdin maintained connections with the Munich Institute and by 1928 had drawn to Munich three important colleagues who subsequently played a key role

in the activities of the Genealogical-Demographic Department: Hans Luxenburger, whose main work involved psychiatric studies of twins and the nature-nurture problem; Bruno Schulz, who perfected the methodology for empirical genetic prognosis; and Adele Juda, who between 1928–1944 at the suggestion of Rüdin conducted an extensive study of genius and mental disorder (*Höchstbegabung und psychische Anomalien*) [Weber and Burgmair, 1993]. Meanwhile, before his death in 1926 Kraepelin was able to interest the Rockefeller Foundation in the Institute. June 1928 saw the opening of the new building on Kraepelinstrasse in Munich, which had been financed in large part by the New York foundation [Spielmeyer, 1928]. Rüdin, who had been contemplating a return to Munich since 1927, was named director of a "greatly expanded" genealogical-demographic department in November 1928. The department was now funded primarily by the Kaiser Wilhelm Society, private benefactors, and the Emergency Fund for German Science (*Notgemeinschaft der Deutschen Wissenschaft*).

"REGENERATOR GENERIS HUMANI:" PSYCHIATRIC GENETICS IN THE SERVICE OF RACIAL HYGIENE

The much-improved working conditions in the new building led to extremely productive scientific work in all areas, and this reinforced the international reputation of the Institute. In addition to the Department of Serology headed by Felix Plaut and Walther Spielmeier's department, which was considered the "international mecca of neuropathology," Rüdin's Genealogical-Demographic Department contributed greatly to the scientific reputation, and in 1928, for instance, was able to attract four visiting scientists from abroad [Deutsche Forschungsanstalt für Psychiatrie, 1929]. With four secretaries, two research fellows, a "psychiatric medical statistician" (*psychiatrischer Medizinalstatistiker*), and a "psychiatric travel assistant" (*psychiatrische Reiseassistentin*), Rüdin at last embarked upon large-scale studies in psychiatric genetics in accordance with his ideas. Thanks to plentiful funding for equipment and supplies, including cars, Rüdin's department could study subjects and contact other psychiatric facilities all over Germany.

By 1938, with the aim of identifying 9,000 sets of twins, the staff had examined the medical records of 160,000 index subjects; and by 1945 the department had acquired data on at least 30,000 additional families, including 200,000 individuals. These numbers alone reflect the energy Rüdin put into his research in support of his position on psychiatric racial hygiene. And it was not only after 1933 that such investigations were conducted. Since 1930 Rüdin had been the head of the Joint Project, which, with the support of the Rockefeller Foundation, had helped fund anthropological and psychiatric research facilities in Germany. He received at least 145,000 German marks from this source up to 1934.

Rüdin's growing importance was evident both within the Institute and in international professional organizations. In 1931 he succeeded Spielmeier as head of the entire Institute, and in Washington in 1932 he was

elected president of the International Federation of Eugenic Organizations. Rüdin's methods also had a strong influence on psychiatric genetics outside Germany. Many of those who were later important representatives of this field (e.g., Eliot Slater, Erik Strömberg, Franz Kallmann, and Erik Essen-Möller) received some of their training in Munich between the World Wars.

Doubtless an important reason for the increasing popularity of eugenic models in Germany as apparently simple and scientific solutions to numerous social problems was the ongoing economic and political crisis of the Weimar Republic in the early 1930's [Proctor, 1988], as illustrated by a meeting of the Prussian State Health Council (*Preußischer Landesgesundheitsrat*) in July 1932 on the topic of "Eugenics in the Service of Public Welfare" (*Eugenik im Dienste der Volkswohlfahrt*). Although neither Rüdin nor any of his staff were present, their views played a decisive role. The experts who spoke cited publications from Rüdin's Genealogical-Demographic Department in support of their position that laws governing eugenic sterilization were urgently needed [Verhandlungen des Preußischen Landesgesundheitsrats, 1932].

When the National Socialists seized power in January 1933, Rüdin did not see this as a turning point in his life or in his political views; it did, however, open up the possibility for him to intensify his research. He saw National Socialism as the long-hoped-for opportunity to give racial hygiene the place in official health, population, and psychiatric policy which he felt it deserved. Hitler's state supplied the political prerequisites for putting into practice the utopian idea of racial hygiene that Rüdin had supported since 1900. The overlap already mentioned between Nazi ideology and Rüdin's conservative-national and political-elitist stance facilitated his cooperation with a political party which from its organizational inception had advanced a program of racial hygiene. A private observation of Rüdin's that now "the whole atmosphere is different" (*der ganze Geist ist doch schon ein anderer*) [Max Planck Institute of Psychiatry, 1933] showed his intention of working with the National Socialist state openly and voluntarily for the benefit of his own ideas on racial hygiene. Presumably he would also have done this in any other political system that made use of racial hygiene arguments. The fact that his cooperation with the Nazi regime also legitimized a form of government with no regard for human rights or democracy was never a problem for him, which can be shown clearly by numerous official and scientific statements Rüdin formulated after 1933 [e.g., Rüdin, 1934, 1938].

All of Rüdin's activities after 1933 can be derived from this basic behavior pattern. For his new responsibilities he made free use of the opportunities available to him as head of a Kaiser Wilhelm Institute. Although the draft text of the sterilization law did not stem directly from him, the official at the Reich Ministry of the Interior responsible for it, Arthur Gütt, was able not only to make use of Rüdin's earlier publications, but also to get him to prepare the official scientific commentary on the law, which was part of the guidelines on implementation [German Federal Archives, 1938; Gütt

et al., 1934]. Rüdin hesitated as little here as he did during the process of *Gleichschaltung*, in which, for example, the Society for Racial Hygiene was subordinated to Nazi ideals. With the forced unification of smaller groups into the Society of German Neurologists and Psychiatrists (*Gesellschaft deutscher Neurologen und Psychiater*), he became the head of the new group both at the request of the Ministry of the Interior and on his own initiative. Beyond this, he played a major role in the propagation of racial hygiene doctrines in the "Third Reich," e.g., in his capacity as commentator prior to the implementation of the Genetic-Biological Evaluation of the General Population (*Erbbiologischen Bestandsaufnahme der Gesamtbevölkerung*), as an advisor and expert witness for the genetic health courts, and as a university teacher and organizer of seminars [Roemer, 1934]. Here again he made use of the staff, the institutional structure, and the material resources of the German Institute for Psychiatric Research. After Spielmeyer's sudden death in February 1935, Rüdin became the dominant figure at the Institute because none of the other department heads had achieved comparable standing in public life.

The funds provided to Rüdin by the National Socialist government were commensurate with the inherent importance of racial hygiene for the political system. Although even after 1933 the "beggar of millions," as he was called by his assistants, did not have an easy time obtaining funding for his research, the size of the Genealogical-Demographic Department staff makes clear that at least through 1939 Rüdin could count on generous support. In no small part as a result of direct funding from Hitler's Reich chancellery, amounting in 1938 to 40,000 German marks, Rüdin was able to employ up to 48 secretaries and 12 scientists in his own department, or about two thirds of the Institute's entire staff. In his letters of thanks Rüdin assured Hitler that he would always structure his research in such a way that the "results will contribute to providing an ever firmer basis for the further expansion and realization of your racial hygiene program in the German Volk" [Max Planck Institute of Psychiatry, 1936].

The projects financed with such funds after 1933 were extremely diverse. Whether a scientist's publications served mainly as a venue for spreading ideology or made a substantive contribution to the field of psychiatric genetics as a whole depended to a large extent on the integrity and political stance of the individual researcher. Rüdin did in fact allow his staff members scientific and political leeway as long as this did not endanger his own position as a policy advisor to the regime on matters of health, psychiatry, and racial hygiene. Up to 1936, for example, he gave his support to Franz Kallmann, a psychiatrist and geneticist of Jewish background because Rüdin valued Kallmann's work on the genetics of schizophrenia very highly [Kallmann, 1938]. Bruno Schulz, who in 1936 published his internationally acclaimed *Research Methods in Medical Genetics* (*Methodik der medizinischen Erbforschung*), questioned Nazi sterilization practice under the protection of his mathematical apparatus, which only specialists could understand [Schulz, 1936].

On the other hand, there was Rüdin's staff member Theo Lang, who had been a member of the Nazi party since the early 1920's and who took questionable positions on the origins of homosexuality and cretinism [Lang, 1939], along with some of the Austrian scientists, who as supporters of National Socialist ideas had had to leave their country of birth in 1934 after the assassination of Federal Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuß. As head of the Institute, Rüdin arranged for them to work there, something other members of the staff considered to be an "invasion by the Austrian Nazis" [Pongratz, 1977]. Studies on the population genetics of schizophrenia and affective psychoses were still the main topic in Rüdin's department. However, his research projects on "criminal biology" and "antisocial elements" were influenced by Nazi politics and ideology.

The ideological atmosphere of national socialism also facilitated genetic research because most authorities and psychiatric clinics opened their patients' records for Rüdin's staff. Some members of Rüdin's department did not respect the privacy of "genetically interesting families," who feared that data collected for scientific research could be misused for forced sterilization. However, Rüdin's department was granted a special status by the Bavarian Ministry of the Interior that excluded it from the duty to inform the "health courts" about those psychiatric patients who according to law should have been sterilized.

The chances of pursuing an academic career also depended on having appropriate political views. Whereas those scientists in Rüdin's department who were party members had had their postdoctoral work (a prerequisite for a tenured university position) approved by Rüdin relatively quickly, the politically inactive Bruno Schulz did not reach this level until 1949, even though as a scientist he was much more highly qualified. But in spite of such mechanisms, the Genealogical-Demographic Department was not merely a component or accomplice of National Socialist racial hygiene. Hans Luxenburger, for example, attracted the displeasure of the party because he entertained close contacts with "Catholic eugenics" as represented by the Jesuit Hermann Muckermann, and because he publicly criticized the "impregnation theory" of the Franconian Nazi *Gauleiter* Julius Streicher that a German woman who had had but one sexual encounter with a "non-Aryan" was no longer able to conceive any "Aryans."

In the end, Rüdin himself became entangled in the oligarchic power structure of national socialism. Because he held such strict views on racial hygiene and was convinced of the need for a government-controlled health policy, there were serious differences of opinion between him and the *Führer* of the National Socialist Physicians' League (*NS-Reichsärztesführer*), Gerhard Wagner, who supported a party-oriented, "pragmatic" approach [Ganssmüller, 1987]. Rüdin's joining the Nazi party in 1937 could not disguise the fact that the value of his views on racial hygiene for the National Socialist state was gradually declining. Furthermore, when Arthur Gütt retired in 1939 Rüdin lost his most important supporter in Berlin's ministerial bureaucracy. In this situation Rüdin attempted to protect his position by initiating

closer contacts with the *SS Ahnenerbe*, an SS organization that funded cultural and scientific activities. But he underestimated the SS claim to power, which in the long run included plans to "take over" the Institute [Kater, 1974]. Beginning in 1940, at the instigation of Walther Wüst, the "curator" of the *SS Ahnenerbe*, the so-called SS research fellows (*SS-Stipendiaten*) in the Genealogical-Demographic Department involved Rüdin in long and complex disputes that prevented any further productive scientific work. And because of the consequences of the war, after 1941 research in the department came to a virtual standstill.

Rüdin was not directly involved in the preparations for and execution of any murders in the "T4 action" ("euthanasia action," named after the location of its office in Berlin, Tiergartenstrasse 4), in which at least 80,000 mentally handicapped and otherwise "inferior" individuals were put to death; but neither did he respond to the demands of some of his colleagues in the Society of German Neurologists and Psychiatrists, who expected a public protest from him. Although Rüdin did not generally support "euthanasia" of adults, in a list of research topics of importance for the war effort that he prepared in October 1942 he did stress "the value of eliminating young children of clearly inferior quality" [Max Planck Institute of Psychiatry, 1942]. Rüdin did not explain the practical consequences of this statement, but it would appear that he was willing to tolerate "euthanasia" of at least some handicapped children.

In May 1943, Rüdin, Carl Schneider, Paul Nitsche, and Max de Crinis presented a memorandum on the development of German psychiatry that mentioned "euthanasia" as a part of "therapeutic reform." This also shows that Rüdin tolerated "euthanasia" after 1939.

Almost completely uninfluenced by the events of the war, Rüdin continued his work on racial hygiene to the end. The "Eagle Shield of the German Reich" (*Adlerschild des Deutschen Reiches*), awarded to him in 1944, was inscribed "To the pioneer in the cultivation of the human stock" (*Dem Bahnbrecher der menschlichen Erbpflege*), and more than a few German professional journals honored him on his birthdays by calling him the "regenerator generis humani" [Bresler, 1934]. Even in September 1945 in his last official letter to Max Planck, acting president of the Kaiser Wilhelm Society in the immediate postwar period, his main concern was the preservation of his genealogical-demographic data collection [Max Planck Institute of Psychiatry, 1945].

Administration records recounting Rüdin's denazification procedure in Germany, as well as those on the denaturalization proceedings of the Swiss government following his removal as head of the Institute, contained a mixture of both accurate and inaccurate statements and—as in many similar cases—do not reflect either his true political importance or his scientific achievements. Rüdin died of a serious illness in Munich in 1952, still an unrelenting defender of doctrines on racial hygiene and psychiatric genetics that centered on a concept of collective health at the expense of the individual, on conservative ideals relating to social order, and on utopian-biological models of society.

During the "Third Reich," Rüdin was directly responsible for enforcement of sterilization and for the image

that German psychiatry projected, in the activities of its professional organizations. But Rüdin's cooperation with national socialism had consequences that went far beyond his own personal fate. Not only was the reputation of the Institute damaged to such an extent that Kurt Schneider, former head of the clinical department and one of the founders of modern psychopathology, commented in 1949 that the first step the Institute would have to take would be to part company with its "intoxication with genealogy and demography:" psychiatric genetics as an academic field in Germany was, at least for the time being, out of the question. Moreover, for many years to come the view of psychiatry held by the general population was colored by their knowledge of forced sterilizations and the "T4 action." Rüdin, who as long as he lived always saw himself as an "apolitical scientist," had through his activities in the service of racial hygiene contributed substantially to the legitimization and the popularization of the National Socialist government. As head of the German Institute for Psychiatric Research, however, his sense of responsibility should have extended beyond the research conducted under his auspices. The position held by a scientist of public prominence in the medical field also has an undeniable moral dimension [Kater, 1989]. Rüdin's belief in utopian-biological ideas of social organization can serve as a historical explanation for his behavior before and after 1933, but should not be understood as exonerating him from any blame in connection with the often cruel measures that were part of Nazi health and population policy. Science must be aware of the danger when a political system seems to promise the uncompromising realization of an ideology of any type—and medicine must not transcend the borders of its knowledge to legitimize authoritarian political ideas.

As the example of Rüdin shows, the reinterpretation of psychiatry and genetics so as to satisfy requirements dictated by politics and *Weltanschauung* was not compatible with his responsibilities in both the social and the scientific realms. Even Rüdin's earlier scientific accomplishments were not adequate compensation for his sacrifice of these responsibilities.

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